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ABSTRACT

This report presents the effect of immigration on family cohesion, specifically the relationship between parents and children. It draws on 5 years of fieldwork in one New York City immigrant community to describe how the generation gap separating immigrant adolescents from their parents, made wiser by the immigration process, leads these children to rely on violent peer groups for protection. The social development of 25 first and second generation immigrant adolescents, beginning in 7th grade is documented. Each year, observations were performed in the community and the middle school, students and parents were interviewed, and interviews in the Dominican Republic, the country of origin for most participants, were conducted. Results show that many of the parents were unprepared to guide their children through the dangers of their adopted U.S. neighborhoods, and the children therefore relied on neighborhood peers for socialization and protection. For many immigrant adolescents, adoption of violent behavior was a solution to physical threats they faced. Once they left their neighborhoods or the threats to safety disappeared, they generally ended their involvement with violent peers. (Contains 38 references.) (SM)

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Dreams, Gangs, and Guns:

The Interplay Between Adolescent Violence and Immigration in a New York City Neighborhood

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April 2002

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Executive Summary

Preventing violence among adolescents is necessary to assure the safety of schools, neighborhoods, and adolescents themselves, but effective prevention requires an understanding of its causes. This report draws on five years of field work in one immigrant community in New York City to describe how the generation gap separating immigrant adolescents from their parents, made wider by the immigration process, leads these children to rely on violent peer groups for protection. While previous research has tried to explain adolescent violence among immigrants in terms of cultural alienation, this research suggests that much violence among immigrant adolescents is a pragmatic response to neighborhood conditions, and that effective prevention should also be a matter of taking appropriate pragmatic steps.

The author documented the social development of 25 first- and second-generation immigrant adolescents, beginning when the children were in 7th grade. Each year, the author spent hundreds of hours as a participant-observer in this immigrant community and in its middle school, as well as formally interviewing the students and their parents. In addition, the author conducted several interviews in the Dominican Republic, the country of origin for the great majority of the families in the study. This field work produced more than 2,800 interview summaries and almost 600 summaries of field notes, all of which the author coded and analyzed for this report.

The results show that many parents of immigrant adolescents are ill-prepared to guide their children through the dangers of their adopted U.S. neighborhoods, and that these children therefore become particularly reliant on neighborhood peers for socialization and protection. For many immigrant adolescents, the adoption of violent behavior is not a cultural response to discrimination or alienation, but a solution to the physical threats they face. Once these adolescents leave their neighborhoods or the threats to their safety disappear, they generally end their involvement with violent peers.

The stories of immigrant adolescents captured here suggest that government and community institutions can prevent adolescent violence in immigrant communities in several ways. Schools, after-school programs, and other social venues should be places of safety, where immigrant adolescents can learn positive, nonviolent social skills. Immigrant adolescents should have access to legitimate, part-time employment as an alternative to the ample opportunities they have to deal drugs in inner city neighborhoods. Finally, government institutions, such as public schools, child welfare agencies, and juvenile justice agencies should actively engage immigrant parents, training them in appropriate child-rearing and disciplinary techniques and informing them about the actual risks that their children face in their neighborhoods.

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Introduction

The number of immigrants who find a new home in the United States has increased steadily since 1972. Today, one-fifth of the United States' total population are either immigrants (27 million) or U.S.-born children of immigrants (28 million). Most of these newcomers settle in metropolitan areas of California, Florida, New Jersey, New York, and Texas. For example, roughly one million new immigrants arrived in New York between 1980 and 1990. Immigration in New York has had such a major impact on the city's population that as of 1995, half the city's inhabitants were either foreign-born or second-generation immigrants (New York City Department of City Planning, 1996). Many of those first-generation immigrants are children and adolescents; nearly one-third of all students in New York City public schools are immigrants (Rivera-Batiz, 1996).

This report focuses on the effect immigration has on the relationship between these adolescents and their immigrant parents, and on the adolescents' adaptation to conflict in the neighborhood where their parents have settled. Drawing data from the immigration experience of a group of 25 families, most of them from the Dominican Republic, I present how, triggered by unemployment in their home country, Dominican immigrants come to the United States in search of better opportunities for themselves and their children, and settle in inner city areas. This process of immigration leads to a generational disconnect between immigrant parents and their adolescent children, as it has done with earlier waves of immigrants. The cultural distance between parents and adolescents causes the young people to rely mainly on their peers for advice and cues regarding behavior as they adapt to the often violent reality they encounter in their new home country.

As a consequence of this break in the normal process of family socialization and of having settled in an area where violence is prevalent, first-generation (foreign-born) immigrant adolescents and second-generation adolescents (those born in the U.S. to immigrant parents) adopt violent behaviors to protect themselves from actual or perceived threats from others in their neighborhood. In other words, immigrant adolescents adopt violent behavior and join groups of violent peers and gangs as a way to ensure their safety or in direct response to violent threats. I will argue, however, that once the violent circumstances dissipate, affiliations with violent adolescent peer groups also diminish.

Previous literature on this topic has stated that cultural alienation from the host society is the primary reason adolescent immigrants engage in antisocial behavior and affiliate with gangs. I argue that the cultural disconnect between parents and children places adolescents in a vulnerable position, creating an opening for gangs to present themselves as a safer and more practical alternative to the values and behaviors advocated by immigrants' parents, which the youth perceive as obsolete. I present affiliation with violent adolescent peer groups not as a culture of opposition that stems from alienation, but as a safety network. The perceived need to join peer groups for safety is especially strong among the adolescents whose parents are unable

to offer advice on ways to navigate the new and often violent environment.

I will draw on previous research suggesting that migration, leading to a widening of the generation gap, contributes to a weakness in the neighborhood's collective efficacy. Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls (1997) define collective efficacy as "social cohesion among neighbors combined with their willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good." Collective efficacy explains juvenile crime as the result of adults' collective inability to effectively supervise the neighborhood's young peer groups. The migration process undermines parental authority, limiting the adults' ability to watch over the adolescents and share in communal supervision of the neighborhood, and making it even more important for immigrant adolescents to find other ways to stay safe, such as turning to peer networks.

This paper has two related goals—to present the effect immigration has on family cohesion, and specifically on the relationship between parents and children; and to present how cultural discontinuity affects the socialization processes of first- and second-generation adolescent immigrants in the neighborhood in which they settle. I will argue that the physical location where immigrant families settle is of primary importance in determining how the generational disconnect plays out among immigrant adolescents. I will place special emphasis on how, given the generation gap, adolescents adapt to the violence they find in inner city neighborhoods, adopting forms of behavior learned from neighborhood peers.

The need to adapt to and cope with neighborhood violence is a problem immigrant families share with their nonimmigrant inner city counterparts. Immigration, however, is an additional factor that increases the risk that youth will engage in violent behavior or join gangs. This is because the children of immigrants are more likely to solely rely on their peers to deal with the stresses of violence and to determine best practices in navigating the city streets. Their parents may not recognize signs of early trouble in their children or be able to draw on past experiences to understand the problems their children are facing. I also look at differences in the acculturation of first- and second-generation immigrants to show how both groups adapt to violence.

Following this introduction, the report is divided into five sections: The Study; Dreams; Gangs and Guns; Adaptation of Immigrant Youth; and Summary and Conclusions. *The Study* describes the research design, methodology, and sample and neighborhood selection. It also includes a review of literature that explores the relationship between adolescents, violence and immigration. *Dreams* presents some of the reasons behind the Dominican immigration to the United States. Further, this section discusses immigration's effect on family cohesiveness, especially on the relationship between parents and children. It examines the cultural differences that arise between parents and children as a result of the immigration process and focuses on the different expectations placed on boys and girls. *Gangs and Guns* explores the social organization of adolescent conflict in the sample members' neighborhood. It illustrates how gangs affect adolescent development in second-generation immigrant families and the way recent arrivals adapt. It discusses how drug markets influence the proliferation of violence, the use of guns, and the witnessing of killings. Witnessing violence becomes a part of growing up in the host country.

In this environment, many adolescents decide to carry weapons as a means of protection. In *Adaptation of Immigrant Youth*, I present how the process of immigration has affected 12 of the sample members, as viewed at 16 and 17 years of age. The final section is a summary outlining my conclusions and proposing policy recommendations.

The Study

The data presented in this paper include information collected as part of a larger longitudinal and ethnographic study of adolescent violence sponsored by the Vera Institute of Justice under the direction of Dr. Mercer Sullivan. As part of this study, I began participant-observation in a junior high school in a predominantly immigrant neighborhood of New York City. For three years, I tracked and documented the social development of 25 students, beginning when the students were in seventh grade and ending with the completion of their first year of high school. In addition to observing the teens as they interacted in their school and neighborhood, I interviewed each of the students and their parents a minimum of once annually for the duration of the study (three waves).

I also spent many hours observing the entire school and noted situations involving conflicts and violence among the rest of the student population, in the school and in the neighborhood. Funding from the National Institute of Justice allowed for an additional fourth wave of interviews, which were conducted with 12 of the original 25 sample members (five new immigrants and seven American-born) in order to further explore the way their immigration history was affecting their development. Finally, I spent ten days in the Dominican Republic, where I traveled from the capital to the countryside, visiting the families of most of the adolescents and speaking with them informally.

The following table outlines the number of students and parents interviewed during each wave of interviews.

Table I
Students and Parents Interviewed

Wave 1		Wave 2		Wave 3		Wave 4	
Students	Parents	Students	Parents	Students	Parents	Students	Parents
25	25	20	17	19	17	12	0

An interesting characteristic of this community, and one that provides a view into the relationship between immigration and youth violence, is the co-existence of both more and less recent immigrants. Different levels of acculturation between new immigrants and second-

generation immigrants result in different degrees of exposure to violence, involvement and victimization. Some existing research, for example, suggests that very recent immigrants are less likely to become involved in delinquency because they have yet to be exposed to the risk factors associated with American inner-city areas. Some examples of this are apparent in our data, along with contrasting examples of very recent immigrant adolescents who are jolted into sudden and intense delinquent trajectories by their abrupt confrontation with violent challenges in their new environment.

The Use of Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods allow both the social context and the social construction of meaning to be captured through the use of observation and in-depth interviews. The qualitative approach provided a window into the immigrant adolescents' rationales for engaging or not engaging in violent behavior. This methodology gave a voice to the sample members and provided a first-hand understanding of how immigration affected their lives.

All field notes and interviews were summarized and input into a computer program designed to analyze qualitative data. For this study a total of 2,867 summaries of all four waves of interviews and 593 summaries of field notes were used. All of the data were collected over a five-year period, from 1995 to 2000.

The summaries were labeled with one or more of the following codes.

- Gang: Conflict caused by block gangs, gangs, or incidents in which the students rely on gangs as a means of resolving a conflict.
- Stealing: Incident in which money, clothing or other property was taken.
- Weapon: Incident in which a box cutter, knife or gun was used or carried.
- Jump: Conflict in which one student attacked or threatened to attack another with the help of three or more friends.
- Threat: Conflict in which one contender threatened the other with physical violence.
- Sexual: Conflict that was sexual in nature.
- Clothing: Conflict in which a style of dress is mocked.
- Defending friend(s): Conflict in which a contender is involved as a result of defending friends or relatives.
- Drugs: Conflict in which drugs were involved.
- Neighborhood: Description or perception of the neighborhood.

The coded data were also identified as belonging either to parents or to adolescents and the adolescents' first- or second-generation status was noted. As the data analysis progressed, the following codes were added to capture some of the themes that began to emerge.

a) *Recent Arrivals-Second Generation.* This code was used to flag statements or events referring to perceived differences between recent arrivals and adolescents born in the United

States. The following is an example extracted from the interview summaries: "If you have the hip-hop look people like you more. If you dress with bright colors they call you hicks (dress like people from Dominican Republic). If you know how to dress they don't make fun of you that much." Another example comes from a field note summary: "Orianis is back in school. She was suspended for a week because she hit a student in another class. Orianis is constantly fighting with everybody. She gets easily upset and reacts by hitting the person. Her classmates call her 'campesina' [country girl]."

b) *Gender Differences.* After an initial review of the data, it became clear that different gender expectations were often a source of tension, especially between parents and their children. An example of a summary identified with this code is: "The male is exposed to more things out in the street. What one fears with the females is that a male is going to do her harm." Another example, from the field notes, is: "The principal tells me that she often finds the mentality that 'it is always the boy's fault.' Most of the time, when there is an issue between boys and girls, the boys are the ones blamed. She explained that in her experience, many times this is not the case."

c) *Differences Between Countries.* This code is used for statements in which sample members refer to differences between the host and home countries. An example from one of the interviews is: "Alberto has been in the U.S. for one year. He likes U.S. better because it's prettier. He likes the Dominican Republic better because it's safer: 'Fewer muggings and less people getting killed.'" Another example, from the field notes: "Today Aida [seventh grade teacher] met with 45 mothers and 2 fathers. Aida gave the parents their children's grades. The major complaints that Aida had about the students were that they didn't do their homework and/or were misbehaving in the classroom, either by not paying attention in class or talking with their friends. Many parents ended the meeting with a threatening 'we are going to talk about this when we get home.' A mother hit her child on the shoulder with her fist. The mother, as many others explicitly or implicitly did during the evening, asked the teacher to physically punish her child. A mother gave permission to hit her child, saying 'I don't believe in the American way.'"

d) *Generational Differences.* This label codes summaries that contain references to differences between parents and children. Here is one example from an interview summary: "Francine says that she has a double face: with her family 'she doesn't 'act mature'; in the street 'she acts mature.'" From the field notes: "Nydia [a mother working in the school] thinks there has been a change in the pattern of immigration into the community. 'Before the 80s we came to work, now drugs and easy money attract the youngsters.'"

Analyzing the data according to these different themes and controlling for generation and immigration history allowed us to explore the relationship between immigration and violence.

Sample Selection

In 1995, I selected a sample of 25 seventh graders attending one junior high school in an immigrant neighborhood in New York City. When selecting the sample, I considered the following attributes (see Table II):

Gender: There were 15 boys and 10 girls, most of Dominican descent. There was an oversampling for boys because males are more likely to become involved in juvenile crime.

Academic Ability: The adolescents selected represented a wide array of academic abilities. Five of them were at the top of their class, while seven had academic difficulties. School personnel considered the remaining thirteen students to be of average ability.

Language and Immigration: Twelve sample members attended bilingual education classes. Seven of them had spent less than three years in the United States. All of the students were either first- or second-generation immigrants: Fourteen students were first-generation, born in the U.S. with immigrant parents, and 11 were born outside the United States in the Dominican Republic.

Troubled Students: In order to ensure that the sample included students who were considered "trouble makers," I recruited three students assigned to a special school program for students who are struggling academically and misbehaving.

Table II
Sample Characteristics

Variable	#
Gender	
Boys	15
Girls	10
Ethnicity	
Dominican	21
Cuban	1
Puerto Rican	3
Average siblings at home	1.5
Average number of siblings	2.4
Average residential changes during time of research	1.1
Immigration	
First Generation	11
Second Generation	14
Employment	
Households with at least one family member with regular employment	17
Households without family members with regular employment	8
Benefits	
Households receiving public benefits	11
Household not receiving public benefits	14

The Neighborhood: El Dorado

El Dorado, the code name for the neighborhood where the students live, is an immigrant neighborhood in New York City. Historically, this neighborhood has been the first stop in the United States for many immigrants. The surplus of new immigrants, the majority of them from the Dominican Republic, has transformed the face of the neighborhood: a great number of Dominican restaurants dot the area, Spanish is the primary language spoken in all of the stores, and Dominican music (Merengue and Bachata) can be heard from loudspeakers outside of the many bodegas that supply the neighborhood.

Despite renewed business vitality brought by the influx of newcomers, however, the area has many social problems. In 1995 when the study began, 25 percent of the neighborhood's residents lived below the poverty line and the unemployment rate was 11 percent. In addition, 11 percent of the population relied on public assistance and 24 percent received Medicaid. The neighborhood's proximity to main routes of transportation has nourished a major drug market that supplies cocaine and heroin to drug sellers around the New York metropolitan area.

Drugs have been and continue to be a serious problem in the area. All of the adolescents in the study were aware that there were many drug sellers in their neighborhood. They often referred to drug dealers as "tigres" [tigers] who can always be found "on the corners" of El Dorado's blocks. Parents commonly tell their children to avoid "los tigres" and if they spot trouble, to go the other way. Other residents, however, see drugs as something that only affects those involved in the trade—the people buying and selling. Nelson, one longtime neighborhood resident, gave his opinion about the neighborhood and the drug related problems: "They don't waste their time stealing. Here one can wear a gold chain and they don't take it from you. They are paying attention to their business. Their business gives them more benefits. The shooting and [drug] wars go on between them." Somehow, ironically even, the statistics seem to confirm Nelson's intuition. While the neighborhood has one of the highest homicide rates in New York City, in all other crime categories, El Dorado falls below citywide averages (Garfield and Abramson, 1994). Another consequence of the heavy drug trade is the division of the neighborhood into "selling" blocks. The drug business generates divisions among blocks, as drug dealers define specific blocks as their "turf" or sales area.

Five factors made this neighborhood especially fit for the proposed research:

a) The Dominican Republic has been the number-one source of immigrants to New York City from the 1970s until today. The majority of these Dominican newcomers are very young: 37 percent of them are under 18 (New York City Department of City Planning, 1996).
b) The location of the neighborhood next to main routes of transportation to other states and other New York City neighborhoods has facilitated an extensive drug market in the area, engendering violence in the competition for "selling spots" and during transactions. Drug markets have consistently related to high degrees of violence.
c) As previously stated, the neighborhood has one of the highest homicide rates in New York

City.

d) The increase in Dominican participation at all levels of narco-trafficking constitutes the emergence of a new criminal group of major significance in the drug arena (Garrido 1992).
e) The number of Dominicans in the custody of New York State penitentiaries has increased. Between 1986 and 1991 "[t]he major source of growth for the foreign-born population under custody was the increase in inmates born in the Dominican Republic and Colombia" (Nygard 1995).

Literature Review

The study of youth violence and how it relates to the neighborhood context has been a topic of renewed interest in recent years (Samson, Morenoff, and Earls, 1999; Fagan and Wilkinson, 1998; Sullivan, 1989). There has been a call in the criminology field to further investigate the correlation between adolescent development and socialization into the use of violence (Sampson, 1993). A few studies have analyzed in-depth the current social context that young people face growing up in the inner-city (Sullivan, 1989; Anderson, 1990, 1994, 2000; Canada, 1995; Wilkinson and Fagan, 1996).

These studies open a window onto the normative behaviors that form part of the current code of conduct in the inner city. Anderson (1994) asserts that there is an inclination toward violence in the inner city that originates from the circumstances its inhabitants face: "the lack of jobs that pay a living wage, the stigma of race, the fallout from rampant drug use and drug trafficking, and the resulting alienation and lack of hope for the future" (Anderson 1994, p. 81). This situation leads to the development of the code of the streets, which Anderson defines as "a set of informal rules governing interpersonal public behavior, including violence" (Anderson, p. 82). Sullivan (1986) discusses how different neighborhood characteristics influence the socialization of boys into different delinquent careers and, more importantly, how neighborhood networks lead to different access to jobs and the cessation of delinquent behavior.

The process of acculturation into violent behavior has also been reported in recent studies that looked at immigrant groups (Chin, 1996; Moore, 1991; Padilla, 1992; Vigil, 1983 and 1988). Previous studies have consistently found that youths born in the United States to immigrant parents are more involved in crime than are recent arrivals (Tonry, 1997; Hernandez, 1999). Some authors (Fernandez-Kelly and Schauffler, 1994; Portes and Rumbaut, 1996) question this finding for more recent waves of immigrants. They argue that, due to the lack of manufacturing jobs and the nonwhite ethnic origin of recent immigrants, these adolescents face more discrimination than did earlier immigrants to the United States, and that discrimination results in an acculturation in which the immigrants reject the values of mainstream society. According to these authors, gangs represent one option, an alternative to the dead-end jobs and joblessness offered by mainstream society. Diego Vigil explains that gang membership provides some new and second-generation immigrants with an alternative source of identity and personal fulfillment. Many other authors (Moore, 1991; Padilla, 1992; Rodriguez, 1993) have addressed

the issue of violence and gang formation, but there is a need to further explore the adaptation of immigrant adolescents who do not join in these activities.

A number of classic studies (Thrasher, 1927; Spergel, 1964) and more recent studies (Vigil, 1988; Moore, 1991; Padilla, 1992; Chin, 1996) have examined the structure and organization of youth gangs in immigrant neighborhoods. These studies have generally concentrated on older adolescents already engaged in serious criminal activity, but have not traced explicit connections between the immigrant experience and the onset of delinquent activity in early adolescence. Drawing on existing theories of social disorganization and blocked opportunity, these studies have often posited relationships between delinquency and social disadvantage that are equally applicable to immigrant and nonimmigrant youths living in poor, urban neighborhoods, without focusing specifically on factors related to conditions in immigrant communities. This report builds on these studies by focusing on how specific conditions of family and neighborhood organization that are related to immigration affect patterns of adaptation and development in adolescents, especially with respect to violence.

In addition, I argue that the adoption of violent behavior, for many immigrant adolescents, is not a cultural response to discrimination, but a solution to a physical threat felt in a context in which "representing" an adolescent peer group is perceived as enhancing safety. The emphasis on the role of threat in explaining gang behavior is an important theme in recent gang literature (Decker, 1996; Fleisher, 1998; Miller, 1999). However, once the adolescents step out of this neighborhood, and the threats to their safety disappear, their involvement with violent peer groups trails off or ends altogether.

The present study also differs from previous ethnographic studies that have focused solely on American-born adolescents. I focus on the socialization of immigrants, who are increasingly making up more of the inner-city population. Other research efforts that did focus on immigrants studied primarily gang enrollment, and at a later stage of adolescence. I expand on these studies by focusing on early stages of adolescence and on the process of adaptation rather than looking solely at those identified as gang affiliates. Like some of the authors, however, I present the process of immigrant adolescent adaptation as one in which teens quickly discover that they must learn to deal with the violence generated by the code of the street.

To understand the influence immigration has on juvenile violence, I use an understanding of migration recently posited by Waters (1999) in *Crime and Immigrant Youth*. Waters argues that immigration should be understood as a social process that involves three generations: the immigrant parents, who have not been socialized into the host-country values; the second-generation children, who are socialized into the host-country values through an unusual dependence on peer group interactions, schools, and mass media; and lastly, the third-generation children, who are socialized by their families in the "normal" fashion.

Like Waters, I present the migratory process as a mismatch between parents' norms and values and those of their children, who are growing up with a different reference group—a different group of people that give them cues as to appropriate behavior—and in a different environment. I will also show how these differences between parents and children affect the

adolescents' adaptation to their new social context---a social context characterized by the existence of adolescent peer groups that use territorial identification and violence as a source of pride and identity. In the next section, *Dreams*, I will explain how parents' and adolescents' different reference groups influence the way Dominican immigrants adapt to their new surroundings.

This research also builds on the concept of collective efficacy. That concept explains why the undermining of parental authority affects neighborhood delinquency and violence, and also helps explain how neighborhoods with similar concentrations of poverty can have different crime rates. Sampson, et. al. found that immigration was linked to a lesser degree of collective efficacy. This article will expand on their findings, exploring the reasons for this connection. It will describe how the generation gap, made wider by conditions of immigration, weakens the children's social support, undermines the parents' ability to gain information about their children, and hinders parents' control over them. This research, based on ethnographic work in an immigrant neighborhood in New York City, describes and analyzes patterns of youth violence and examines how these patterns of violence are related to family and neighborhood organization under conditions of immigration.

Dreams

Life previous to the immigrant experience is often described by Dominican parents as socially ideal, with positive family relationships, an extended network of friends, and good relationships with neighbors. Despite the positive identification with the reference group of the home country, an acute lack of job opportunities places the family in economic distress. Hernandez & Rivera-Batiz (1997) compare the number of Dominicans coming to the United States with the unemployment rate of the Dominican Republic, showing that the peak in the number of Dominicans coming to the United States coincided with a peak in the difference between the unemployment rates in the Dominican Republic and the United States:

> During the last fifteen years, the Dominican Republic has experienced a profound economic depression. As standard of living deteriorated, a greater number of Dominicans sought emigration as a way out of impoverishment. They thus moved in increasing numbers to the U.S. and, particularly, New York City (Hernandez & Rivera-Batiz, 1997, p. 27).

Immigration is seen as a viable alternative to the economic dead-end. Immigration represents a pathway to employment for oneself and educational opportunities for one's children. As Saida's mother states:

> In the [home] country people are very nice. One shares with one's neighbors, shares with friends. Problems are resolved better than here [host country]. You don't have that evil [referring to her neighborhood in the U.S.]. Everything is quiet. Everything is better than here. What happens is that one doesn't have the money to live there; one can't go live there. I don't have a home; I don't have a good job over there. How can I go, I can't. Over here I earn my dollars, I can dress, I can eat.

The possibility of a better education for their children is also expressed as an important reason leading to the decision to emigrate. As Martin's mother stated: "Well my country is very pretty, very tropical but there is no security for the boys, for them to make a future for themselves."

During the years of fieldwork, participants used different characterizations (for example, they spoke of money growing on trees) to explain the lure that the U.S. has for many residents of the Dominican Republic, especially for those who could barely make ends meet. In the following excerpt, a woman relates the way her relatives residing in the U.S. would describe their home country: "It's like God lives here. Like the last Coke in the desert. All you see are beautiful people with money." During my trip to the Dominican Republic, while visiting some of the relatives of the sample members, people explained how one knows if a neighbor, or someone, has relatives living in the U.S. They pointed to some houses to which a second floor had been added. In the most impoverished areas they pointed to houses constructed with cement, as opposed to wood and tin, the materials most homes in the area were made of.

Once in the U.S., job opportunities are available to the immigrants but at the very bottom of the social ladder and at low wages. Earning such low wages means that immigrant parents must work many hours and many shifts, making it very difficult to effectively supervise children. As parents struggle through their complicated everyday lives, over time they begin to idealize life in their home country and think of it as a safer, more strict atmosphere in which to raise their children. This idealization of the home country is important because during difficult times, when adolescents get into trouble, parents often resort to sending their child back to the "ideal" environment of the home country.

As parents grow older and increasingly more fond and reminiscent of their home country, their children grow up in a world very different from the one they knew. Second-generation children's references are not the old country stories told by their parents and other relatives; rather, they come from life in the urban United States. These adolescents want stylish clothes, want to listen to different music and to speak English, the language of *their* home country. Even with the best intentions, the parents have a limited capacity to help their children grow and develop, since the children are facing choices and situations foreign to them. Often the parents cannot draw on past experiences to advise their children.

While most immigrants remain in entry-level jobs (working as cab drivers or home attendants, for example), some do reach the desired financial success. David's father made money buying clothes wholesale and selling them retail in his apartment. For many years he invested his profits by buying land in his hometown, in the northern part of the Dominican Republic. Now in his hometown they call him Don David. When I visited the Dominican Republic I had the opportunity to visit his family. While riding a mule up to a main hill on his property, I saw a vast extension of land reaching as far as the coastline. The "encargado" [caretaker] explained that as far as the eyes could see were lands owned by Don David.

Others are not so lucky and for them, the American experience is extremely difficult. The following log excerpt presents how a woman, Ana, described her immigrant experience in the United States while we were waiting in Family Court for her son's case to be called. Cesar, Ana's son, was arrested while robbing a sneaker store with some of his friends, part of a gang who call themselves Araña Negra [Black Spider].

> Ana was married in the Dominican Republic. "I was gorda, bonita, bella pelo largo, nada malo dentro." [Before coming I was fat, pretty, with beautiful long hair and with nothing bad inside.] Ana told me of her dreams of working, buying a house, "como todo emigrante" [like any other immigrant]. Once in the United States, things turned out to be like a bad dream. "Yo lo perdi todo," [I lost everything.] Ana described how she had to share a room with her family. Later her father told her that now, once here [in the U.S], she was on her own. She lost weight. She used to work in Long Island and could not supervise her child. Cesar soon began staying out late, with nobody watching over him. She sent him back to the D.R. for a while to see if things would change for the better. Once Cesar was back however, he got in trouble again. Today while we waited in court, Ana told me the electricity in their home was

cut off, the telephone disconnected... without any assistance from her family. She felt helpless.
"Ay Dios mio!" Ana kept repeating. "Si yo lo hubiera sabido..." [Oh God, if only I could have known.]

It is interesting to note that in both cases presented here the parents, David and Ana, look back to the Dominican Republic as *home*, the place to invest in or return to while their children think of the U.S. as their country. It is especially sad to note that despite his mother's difficult economic situation, Cesar added to the family's troubles by stealing sneakers. This is a clear indication of the two different worlds in which Cesar and his mom lived. Later, I will discuss in more detail the important role clothing and style play in the immigrant youths' lives.

Immigration leads to a break in normal family socialization. The children of the second generation are socialized in spheres (in school, on the street) in which their parents have not had any previous experience. In addition, parents and children rely on different reference groups for their cues on appropriate behavior (parents' reference groups are in the home country; their children's reference groups are peer groups in the host country). The fact that parents and children have different reference groups means that each generation experiences the same social context differently. Parents are relatively content with their current socio-economic status in the U.S. because they compare their present situation to the one they left in their home country, which was far worse. As one mother, Maria, stated: "In the U.S. we eat like rich people in the Dominican Republic." Second-generation immigrants, however, feel a high degree of relative deprivation because their reference group is not family and friends in their parents' home country, but fellow U.S. citizens, many with greater economic means. Second-generation immigrants want to acquire the material goods that are status symbols within their reference group despite their families' limited economic resources. Maria's older son was arrested for selling marijuana, lured by the promise of making money to buy sneakers. This disparity in how members of the same family understand their relative well-being helps to explain the higher likelihood that second-generation immigrants will engage in criminal behavior (Tonry, 1997; Hernandez, 1999).

Parenting

Collective efficacy has recently been used in criminological literature to explain differences in crime in neighborhoods with similar socio-economic characteristics. The research argues that neighborhoods with a network of adults who are able to supervise groups of adolescents are less likely to experience high rates of criminal activity. Immigrant parents often refer to the supervision of adolescents as a problem. The immigration experience puts an additional number of stressors on families that often decreases parents' effectiveness in supervising their adolescent children. Effective parental supervision is undermined by several factors inherent to the immigration process: family disruption; the different speeds and degrees of socialization

experienced by parents and children; circular migration (adolescents traveling back and forth between the U.S. and their home-country with periodic residence in both countries); differences between immigrant parents and their young daughters on what are appropriate gender roles; parents' inability to supervise their children in the same ways they did in their home country; and parents' perceptions that in the U.S., there are institutional constraints limiting their ability to discipline their children. I will discuss each of these factors in detail below.

Family Disruption. Immigration results in a separation of nuclear families that can last years. In the case of Dominican immigrants, mothers will often leave their children with other family members (most times the maternal grandmother) in the home country. Once the mother has been able to settle in the new country, she requests that her children (often one at a time over a period of years) reunite with her. As a result, children in their early-to mid-adolescence join their mothers after a prolonged separation to live with them, for the first time, for a significant period of time. The combination of having been pulled from their home and country and coming to live with someone who feels almost like a stranger creates a sense of alienation that adolescents may express through disobedience. For example, Hector grew up with his father and grandmother in the Dominican Republic until he came to the U.S. to live with his mother at age 12. From the day he arrived, his mother felt she had difficulty controlling Hector and he became increasingly more engaged in violent behavior over time:

> I don't know anything about what Hector is doing. If he's into anything bad, or anything good ... but he doesn't want to go to school. He doesn't want to listen to me. I speak to him and it's like talking to a wall. What he does is answer me back. ... I'm going to send him back. Before he starts living the street, or gets into some vice or gets into any one of so many things, it's better to send him back [to the Dominican Republic] to his father who can control him.

Different Speeds and Degrees of Socialization. The generation gap is exacerbated by the speed with which adolescents socialize in the new country. The normal tension between adolescents and parents worsens in immigrant families due to the fact that parents are less familiar with the culture of the new country and adapt at a slower pace than do their children. This generation gap is further accentuated in second-generation children, increasing the distance in understanding that exists between parents (socialized in the ways of their home country) and children (fully socialized in the host country).

The different rates of adaptation become apparent in two ways:

a) Parents' unawareness of street ethos. Parental unawareness of the street code of behavior becomes most significant when it affects parents' ability to notice the signs that their children are getting into trouble. The following excerpt illustrates what happened when Saida's parents missed the signs that their son Angel was increasingly getting into

trouble—signs that for their younger daughter were quite obvious. Before her brother's arrest, Saida did warn her mother that her brother Angel "se esta moviendo mucho" [was getting in trouble].

> INTERVIEWER: Tell me about your brother [age fifteen]. What happened?
> SAIDA: You see the store that's closed, the one that's next to my building?
> INTERVIEWER: Yes.
> SAIDA: They were selling. They were selling weed. And they pulled my brother into it.
> INTERVIEWER: They were selling weed. At the Deli?
> SAIDA: Yes. And they put my brother up to that. My brother chose to do that. They told my brother to do that and they filled his mind, you're going to get a lot of money. You know, I know those people. You could buy what you need. Sneakers, every week whatever, whatever. So, he fell for the influence, you know. ... So in that building, they [the police] had a camera. So, my brother, like a dumb ass, he got, they put, they gave him three little sacks, because this is the first time he sells. They gave him three little ones; he got caught on the first time. They gave him three little bags. He only sold one and he sold it to the cop. And he got caught like that. So, he's never going to do it again because that was his first experience and look how bad it was. Imagine.

b) Immigrant parents often need to rely on their children in order to deal with government agencies and civic institutions. This role reversal undermines their authority over their children. In Saida's case, presented above, she had to miss a few days of school so that she could accompany her mother to court, serve as translator, and explain to her what was taking place.

Circular Migration as a Disciplinary Measure. Different cultural beliefs held by adolescents and parents can also lead to a disciplinary measure that appears to be new to this wave of immigrants. Many immigrant parents are convinced that the ways in their home country, now idealized in their minds, are *better ways*. In consequence, when concerns arise for the safety of their children or when their children seriously misbehave, parents often decide to send them to the Dominican Republic to be better and more appropriately educated in those proper ways. For example, Raul's mom was concerned that her son was "hanging out too much on the streets" and she had already gone through a difficult experience when her older son became a gang member and stole from their house. In order to prevent a similar outcome for her younger son, Raul, she decided to send him to the Dominican Republic to live with his father until the worst years of adolescence passed. She was determined to let Raul come back only when he comes "hecho un hombre" [once he became a man]. This is how Raul describes the experience:

RAUL: I really didn't like it. To me, I've been without a father for most of my life. My father was completely out of my life since I was eight. It was different and difficult to be with him. I didn't like it. [...]
INTERVIEWER: Did you go to school?
RAUL: I went to three different schools. The first one I was kicked out of. I didn't understand Spanish and couldn't write it. I'd just bug out and not do the work. [...] They said I burned a paper and threw a firebomb. I didn't do any of that. Then they said that I assaulted someone. Someone said that me and my friend was gay so we went up to them and scared them. We went up to them and talked to them. I was in his face because I didn't like anyone talking shit about me. My boys were talking to him. I was just looking at him like I wanted to kill him. We didn't hit anybody.

Although parents may feel sending a child back to their home country is a useful disciplinary tool, often the child does not stay in the Dominican Republic as long as originally expected and returns to the U.S., leaving the root of the problem unaddressed. In order to show the extent of this practice, in the sample of 25 students, four parents sent their children back home to live with relatives and many others expressed their desire to do so. So many adolescents go back and forth between the U.S. and the Dominican Republic that in the Dominican Republic they have a name for them: Dominican Yos. In the following excerpt, Raul, just recently back from the Dominican Republic, describes being a Dominican Yo, and his experience being in the Dominican Republic after having grown up in the U.S.:

RAUL: They considered me a Yo because I had baggy pants. The cops hated us too.
INTERVIEWER: In D.R.? Why?
RAUL: You couldn't have a certain "zero" haircut or earrings, or you'd go to jail. They'd give you a haircut in jail and take it all off.
INTERVIEWER: They'd put you in jail?
RAUL: They say that it's thug stuff. Only the bad people do that. That's what they say.
INTERVIEWER: Is that true?
RAUL: No, it's bullshit. You know they just want to stereotype somebody. They made fun of us.
INTERVIEWER: The fact that they made fun of you, would that mean that people would be more likely to fight with you?
RAUL: Yeah. People are jealous too because we're both English and Spanish. It's ignorance. We're aware of a lot of things. They think that if you come over here that you're looking for money on the streets, over here, over there. It's not like that.
INTERVIEWER: Tell me about that...
RAUL: Yeah, they think that New York is just a gold mine. They think that just because someone comes from New York that they're rich. They try to use you for your money. They

want to go out and they never have any money. They're also quick to talk behind your back. That's why I didn't like having Dominican friends. Most of my friends were American.
INTERVIEWER: You're kidding me! How many friends of yours were American?
RAUL: We had a whole crew of American friends, because my cousin knew them.
INTERVIEWER: Did you guys have a name?
RAUL: No, we were just bugging out. There were ten or twelve of us that would hang out. We couldn't chill with other people. Some of them were cool who wouldn't talk behind our back.
INTERVIEWER: When you were hanging with them would you be speaking English?
RAUL: Yeah. We used to feel comfortable talking English. It was too hard for me to get a girl in Spanish. I couldn't have a good conversation with her. I wouldn't know what she was talking about half the time because I didn't understand Spanish.

Different Expected Gender Roles. The parents in the sample allow adolescent boys to be on the street unsupervised late into the night. But they believe that their daughters, similar in age to the boys, should not be on the street without an adult or male sibling. Oftentimes, female adolescents rebel against this different treatment because they feel it is unfair. This conflict creates a great deal of tension within the family. Because they feel unfairly treated, adolescent daughters lose respect for their parents' authority. This loss of credibility leads to a disregard for the rules their parents set. Parents give several reasons for having different standards for their male and female adolescents.

(1) Fear of rape and its consequences.

"But the problem is that the male, we as parents we give them like more freedom because we can leave a male any place but not a female. A female, one is not supposed to let her go out nine and ten o'clock at night to the street. But the male, well there is corruption and drugs but the male knows how to take care of himself better than a female. Because they can very easily rape a female, even just coming into the building and they can't defend themselves." (Hanna's stepfather).

(2) Fear of an unwanted pregnancy.

"You have to be more careful with females. Because I don't want to, after I've sacrificed myself and I've thought that my daughter is going to study and become someone in the future ... and because of being with a friend or a crony, a boy and she falls in love and ends up with a big belly, not that." (Francine's mother).

(3) Daughter's and family's reputation.

Hilda's mother is very explicit about this correlation between female behavior and reputation.

> "Males can go out but females no. I tell my daughter to follow my example you don't see me out in the street. If you are in the street people are going to be talking about you." (Hilda's mother).

> "Don't you see that a man can have fifty thousand women and man never loses. Now if a woman does the same thing as a man, what do they say? A prostitute. Even though she's a housewife." (Rico's mom).

(4) Boys and girls belong to different social domains.

Sofia's mother is very aware that she is treating her sons and her daughter differently. Despite her daughter's protests, she believes she is fully justified.

> "Sofia is sweet and curious. She always gets mad because the things that I allow William to do I don't allow her to do. They have different curfews. Boys were made for the street. And the female was made for the home."

The majority of the parents hold this belief: Rico's mom explains it with religious connotations.

> "The males are different from females. Males belong to the streets. That's even in the Bible, men are men, men belong to the street." (Rico's mom).

Differences in Child Supervision. In the home country, parents relied on friends and neighbors to watch over their children. In the new urban environment, such a network is not so readily available. Again, parents talk of their home country as an ideal setting in which to raise children, a place where adolescent supervision is everybody's concern. In sharp contrast with this idealized vision of an extended family, once they are in the U.S., parents often see neighbors as a potential threat to the safety of their children; "Over here one doesn't know who's who. One doesn't know anyone." Bienvenido's mother advised him to avoid the adolescents that lived on their block because they were dangerous and had a bad reputation. Evelyn's mom explicitly forbade her daughter to socialize with people from the block because she saw them as "bad people."

Perceived Institutional Constraints. Parents often feel that their ability to successfully discipline their children is hampered because in the U.S. any type of physical punishment can be interpreted as abuse. The mother of a sample member conveyed to me that her child had reported her husband to the child protection agency. Both parents felt like they were treated as criminals. Many parents and teachers of Dominican origin repeat what is becoming an urban folk tale in El

Dorado. A child threatens to call the child protective service agency when his parent attempts to discipline him. The parent, fed up with this ongoing situation, decides to travel to the Dominican Republic with the child. As soon as the airplane lands the father is able "to educate" the child and teach the child to respect adults. The frequency with which this tale is repeated reveals how many parents feel that their hands are tied in terms of disciplining their children in what for them is an appropriate and effective manner. In the following excerpt Raul's mom shares her version of this tale:

> The government does not allow parents to discipline their children: You take your child and smack him on the butt and they already want to take him away because of one smack on the butt. I say what about that smack my boy gave me? Like I told him, I'm not going to do anything to you over here, but when I get to Santo Domingo that's to be resolved. I'm going to do like my friend did to his son. He took him and when he landed at the airport he told him: ' aha come over here. Now we settle up here.' He gave his son such a beating because he had called Child Abuse on him and everything.

Some parents hint at a direct correlation between this inability to discipline their children and their children's engagement in illicit behavior. In Luis's mother's words, "I punish him. No one can stop me because I don't live on Welfare. The city doesn't maintain him. The day he sells drugs it's him, not the city, who is going to get taken away."

Gangs and Guns

In the previous section we have established how the process of migration leads to a wide cultural gulf between parents and children. This creates conditions under which adolescents, judging their parents' advice as inadequate or uninformed, will depend almost exclusively on their adolescent peers for clues on which forms of behavior are most suitable for their new environment.

The neighborhood where immigrants settle is particularly important. It is in this setting that recent arrivals will socialize in the customs and ways of their new country. Second-generation children will use the setting as a fundamental source of socialization, and its inhabitants will become their reference group. If the neighborhood is violent, adolescents will soon have to learn about the norms that organize the violence and adopt the behaviors more likely to keep them safe.

Social Organization of Adolescent Conflict in the Neighborhood

> Our neighborhood is very related to why fights start. In our community you have to be alert of who is around you. ... You have to fight for your respect; people would push you around to find out if you are a chicken.
>
> —Karen, 8th Grader

In the neighborhood, groups of youth have "hang out areas" that tend to overlap with the turf areas of the highly developed drug markets. These groupings may be considered gangs because they are named, ritualized kinds of groups and often they have conflict with other block gangs. The block gangs are not directly employed by drug traffickers, but rather serve as an overlapping source of potential violence in this area. The gangs pose a significant risk to all of the residents in the area, especially the adolescents.

The neighborhood gangs are typically based within one or two street blocks. This division often forces the children to define their loyalties. Many students identify themselves as belonging to a block. They "represent" their block, usually the one where their house is located. Francine described "representing" as an automatic obligation of residence. "If you live on a block you have to represent it. You go to your block and you say, like I got beef, and they come. That means they represent you." Representing provides a strong sense of security that if a conflict occurs, students will have "back-up," or people to "watch their backs," referred to as "props."

In the following excerpt, Saida describes a conflict situation ("beef") and remarks on her continual reliance on friends from her block for safety. In this excerpt, the perception of having "props" is a major factor for the adolescent as she manages her beef.

SAIDA: Trouble. When you have a beef with another girl, or another boy, right. They gang your block up. Like where they live they go with back up, it's called back up. Where you have back up and you letting them know you don't have back up, they jump you. And if you don't have any back up you can't do anything about it.
INTERVIEWER: So, do you have back up?
SAIDA: Yes, I do on my block. ... Because like if you really into the block and everybody like you and stuff, they don't like when people hit you. And I am not the type of girl that gets my block like that, but if that person gets their block...I am not getting jumped by their block I have got to get my block, too.

For Saida and many other sample members people from their block are considered a safety net and resource in a conflict or any potentially violent situation. In the same interview she stated: "In order to stay safe you should be with people from your block. Don't be alone on the street." In the following excerpt, Teresa pointed to a further implication of the rigid social frontiers between blocks. People from other blocks become a safety threat, a potential source of trouble. Throughout this interview Teresa described her neighborhood as calm and peaceful. It was clear that Teresa referred to her block as her neighborhood.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. When do you worry about your safety?
TERESA: When I am outside of my block.
INTERVIEWER: Why?
TERESA: Because there are people that I don't know, and there is people that I know that don't like me. So, it's a problem.

These geographical and social perceptions of danger have real consequences for the mobility of the teen in her immediate surroundings. Teresa reinforces this idea further:

INTERVIEWER: ... Are there any places that you go even though you know they are dangerous?
TERESA: Sometimes, but it has to be a really good reason. I don't come out of my block.

From the adolescents' perspective, "representing"—affiliating with a block gang—carries the benefit of enabling them to navigate the streets safely since it serves as a deterrent to being picked on or victimized by others. Luis refers convincingly to the deterrent aspect of props: "They know not to mess with me, because if they do.... my props...."

Despite the fact that the students perceive representing as a safety resource, the strong identification with one's block may often be a source of conflict. When two blocks "have beef," the residents who belong to each one of the block-gangs automatically have beef with one another. Adolescents will often avoid certain streets because their block has an ongoing conflict with the block gang of that particular street. On one occasion, after an interview, the student, Ali,

and I left the school together. Ali didn't want to walk down Redwood Street, a street next to the school, because "Redwood had beef with his block." Rico reported similar problems and his need to avoid the Graytown area (public housing) because there was an ongoing conflict between Graytown and Cost, Rico's block. After the many interviews, it became apparent that being aware of ongoing block beefs is a good safety strategy since not knowing about block conflicts can increase the likelihood of becoming a target.

A conflict between blocks can often escalate into severe violence and people may resort to using weapons. During her first interview, Saida described the following incident in which people from her block, including her brother, "got guns:"

> A guy named Gerard, he started hitting one of our little kids from the block. He started hitting him and his brother ...and they were going to hit him, but the other block pulled out a gun on him. So, we all ran. But then we met and then we, they all got guns. Our block and their block. So, they got together, but they didn't do it because this lady had already called the cops and the cops were there.

Conflicts between block groups can have long histories. Often the kids most aware of what is happening on the streets can narrate the tales leading up to the latest beef. In the following excerpt Sofia does so:

> SOFIA: Cost [Cost Street] has a lot of problems with Redwood [Redwood Street]. 'Cause Redwood likes to disrespect a lot. Redwood doesn't, they jump, alright, Cost, Redwood, Redwood jumped a guy from Cost. The guy told Cost. Cost got pissed. Now Cost said Redwood and I are enemies. Cost and Clermont [Clermont Street] I think they made up, they're friends now. They made a friendship.
> INTERVIEWER: And who decides this, I mean who -- ?
> SOFIA: They do, the whole group.
> INTERVIEWER: The whole group.
> SOFIA: The whole block. If one goes down it's all of them.

Many students define their friends and enemies as a function of the block to which they belong. Such strong identification with a block carries extreme loyalties. The block is often referred to as family because you can appeal to block members for help when in trouble. Block members are perceived as a resource for help and to maintain safety. In the interviews, numerous stories point to personal or individual conflict, the immediate connection to blocks, and the progressive severity of hitting and retaliation.

The block groups are in conflict more often than not. The conflict between blocks is ever changing, not static. Often blocks establish alliances to fight more powerful blocks. Block groups fight for respect. Respect is the quintessential value in block interchange. Threats of and use of physical force are the currencies with which "respect" is achieved. Some students act in a

similar way in their personal relationships—they fight to gain or keep respect.

The conflict between block groups creates the need for backup. If an adolescent from the block has trouble with a person from another block, and has a big group of friends (from the block group) willing to stand up for him or her, the opponent must also bring "their people" in order to keep the fight on equal terms. This need for backup has become part of the students' lives. When Saida was in the seventh grade, she was making arrangements to meet after school with a friend. She told me she always goes home with somebody else. Why, I asked, thinking that her answer would make reference to the pleasure of her friend's company. "So you get backup," Saida responded. "Just in case somebody jumps you, you have somebody to back you up."

The ongoing rivalry in the neighborhood gives most students, especially those more involved with "block life," a sense that no place is safe. One needs to be constantly on guard. One student who was deeply involved in block gangs explained that he walks with his back against the wall so if a group of people want to jump him, "he would have his back covered." This sense of being in constant danger is exacerbated by the street ethos. Carrying weapons constitutes the extreme of the street ethos. Carrying weapons gives teens a sense of security against the threat from other blocks, and showing weapons is perceived as an immediate way to get respect and prove that you are not afraid to stand up for or defend yourself. At times when the conflict between blocks escalates, it is likely that teens will resort to the use of weapons, as is described in the following log excerpt:

> While talking to Hector, I found out about a fight that took place Friday in the schoolyard around five o'clock, during the afterschool program. Two boys from Cost approached Loco, a boy from Redwood. One of the boys from Cost pulled a gun and tried to shoot Loco. The gun jammed and did not shoot. They started a fistfight. Others teenagers from Redwood got involved in the fight and beat up one of the teenagers from Cost very badly. Hector did not know the reasons behind the conflict. It seemed that Loco had bothered a female cousin of one of the boys from Cost.

The division of the neighborhood into block groups and the social rules that operate within the neighborhood and across blocks constantly influence the daily lives of all of the adolescents. I cannot imagine a better way to document the existence of unwritten rules than by presenting Ali's conscious breaking of them as he talks about his good friend Ario.

> ALI: Oh, we not supposed to be friends, me and Ario.
> INTERVIEWER: No? Why not?
> ALI: Because we are from different blocks.

Guns are part of the everyday life in El Dorado. This was especially poignant during the first years of the research in which both parents and students referred to hearing shootings as almost a

daily event; something "you get used to." The adolescents become accustomed to the presence of guns and their use.

In the following excerpt, Evelyn describes three killings that took place on the corner of her block in one month.

> EVELYN: Most of those guys, you know, drug dealers and stuff. Like, I think a month ago, one was killed. And they had some, some candles for him. And like, you know, like two weeks after that, another one was killed.
> INTERVIEWER: When was that?
> EVELYN: That was like, I think in April.
> INTERVIEWER: Two were killed?
> EVELYN: Three. There were three of them.
> INTERVIEWER: Three were killed on your block How old were they?
> EVELYN: They were, they were like younger than 20, than 22. They can't be older than 22.

Witnessing violence is certainly part of all the adolescent narratives. Some even see the eruption of violence as an intriguing event, worth a closer look. Teresa describes her reaction: "A week ago I saw a drive-by shooting in which a girl was wounded. It was just like a movie. I went to see it." Others witnessed the aftermath of a shooting like Isis did at 7:30 in the morning, on his way to school. He saw a dead body, killed over a drug related money dispute the night before, covered with a blanket. All sample members can refer to gun-related experiences. Wendy witnessed a robbery at gunpoint while waiting with her mother in a beauty parlor. Madison described hearing shootings as a nightly event, adding, "they celebrate having lived one more month." Often these experiences hit closer to home. Juan, Luis's brother, was shot in his house over a street-related dispute. When I visited the house the bullets holes were still visible and Juan was wearing a cast. Judith, a fellow student at the local high school, witnessed the killing of her own mother by the mother's ex-boyfriend. Hilda's brother was arrested as a suspect in a block-related shooting. Hilda, her mother and Hanna all went to the police precinct to inquire about his arrest.

Guns are connected to the adolescent search for respect, the neighborhood block gangs, and especially to the drug markets. There is a generalized view that guns are an immediate way to gain respect; in Ali's words, "Herbs [people who don't stand up for themselves] don't carry weapons." In addition, many see carrying weapons as a means of self-protection. The logic, in Saida's mind, is quite simple: "if somebody has protection [a gun], you should have one too." Pulling a gun can only be done if someone else threatens you with a weapon. Raul conveyed how badly it can be perceived if somebody in the midst of a fair fight pulls a gun: "'cause to pull a gun while you're fighting is like you're saying that you are a coward." Most adolescents in the sample avoid carrying guns, while fully aware that not doing so can result in very serious trouble.

When block gangs are involved, the adolescents are more likely to carry guns, both as a

deterrent to violence and because of their strong belief that the opposing block-gang members will carry them. In the previous section, I referred to an example of weapons used in a block-related dispute. After that incident the school requested an increased number of school safety officers during dismissal. In the days following the incident the school atmosphere was tense and there was an expectation that something serious was about to happen. I asked the lieutenant in charge of the additional school safety personnel the reasons behind their presence during school dismissal. The lieutenant nervously responded, "Nobody is telling me anything. We don't wear bulletproof vests you know." In this situation an adult professional, with back-up, whose job it was to ensure school safety, was afraid that she might be in danger as a result of a violent conflict at the school. This example underscores the dangers young adolescents in the neighborhood face.

In addition to their use as a currency for respect and as a source of protection, guns are an intricate part of the drug dealing business. Guns are used to protect markets. Ali explained the reaction of a friend confronting somebody who wanted to sell on his block: "And he just took the gun and said, 'you better stop selling or I am going kill you.'" The fact that guns symbolize both respect and protection, and their use as an effective tool to avert or punish transgression, makes their ubiquity a sad reality for the adolescents in the inner city. In addition to their awareness of gangs and knives, as children grow older they become more aware of guns and their meaning. It is especially telling, and disturbing, that during the second wave of interviews, when the children were attending eighth grade, almost half, or 10 of the 25 sample members, were able to say where they could buy a gun and how much it would cost. Some even knew insider terms, for example remarking on the much cheaper prices of those guns "que llevan muerto" [that carry a body]—a gun that has already been used in a homicide.

The presence and use of guns in the neighborhood affects the sense of safety among adolescents, increasing their sense of insecurity and further convincing them of their need for protection—a protection that many find in block gangs and weapons. Luis, despite his tough manner and public stance of never being afraid, when asked about when he worried about his safety, responded: "Like you see at night like around ten or later, I see some of the drug dealers and the crack heads they start throwing shots up in the air. That's the only time I worry."

It is under these conditions that many recent immigrants have to quickly adapt. This block gang reality is their new environment. Recent arrivals are pejoratively called "hicks." Hicks are youth who are not well versed in the ways of the city (for example, they don't speak English or "don't know how to dress"). Oftentimes this perceived inability to fit in and adapt to the ways of the new country makes them easy targets—easy to victimize or rob as a means of gaining respect. Initially they are often not accepted by the gangs and must form their own groups. At times this means finding their own resources for backup and methods of developing networks with those who are similarly labeled. In the following excerpt Sofia describes a hick as:

> A person that's not down with the crew. A person that has mad colors. A person that only speaks Spanish. A person that uses like Dominican words. They'd be like farmer,

coming with a yola (sic), like that. They'll play around because you're in a hick class. In a class with pure Spanish people. And you wear mad colors.

Teresa expresses how victimizing recent arrivals is hardly a source of stigma: "Some guys, and they are really popular, take money from the hillbillies." This conflict within an ethnic group is often neglected in the literature, which generally focuses on the conflict existing between different ethnic groups. In fact, many recent arrivals in the sample have complained about being the targets of humiliation and victimization. On one occasion, Bienvenido was robbed by the block-gang of his own street, clearly indicating that residency alone is not a sufficient pre-requisite for belonging to and relying on the block gang.

Why New York City Is Different

As stated before, parents see New York as less safe than the Dominican Republic for various reasons:

a) Neighbors are unknown here and there is lack of trust among them, while in the Dominican Republic neighbors are personally known to one another. People feel they can trust and rely on neighbors for help.
b) There are more weapons on the streets of New York.
c) There are gangs in New York.
d) There is increased violence due to drug markets in New York.

As a consequence of these perceptions, immigrant parents tend to spend most of their time indoors and expect or would like their children to do so as well. Evelyn's parents, for example, severely limited her freedom and activities in early adolescence. In the following excerpt Rico' mother describes the reasons for her fears:

RICO'S MOM There are a lot of fights on this block. Yes, there are a lot of fights on this block.
INTERVIEWER: Why are there so many fights?
RICO'S MOM: Because there are so many drugs. There are a lot of delinquents. In the middle of the summer you see, especially on this street, this street Cost Avenue and Herman. You see that the street never sleeps. A lot of youngsters stay out all night. Besides, what is an adolescent looking for in the street at one or two o'clock in the morning? It can't be anything good.
INTERVIEWER: Mm hmm.
RICO'S MOM: What can one find on the street? Well look, a shot or that one gets killed, or that one gets stabbed. If one is at home, look I only go out from here to my appointments. Maybe on a weekend I'll visit my sister who lives at Taylor Street. I go to visit my father

who lives on Nth Street. Those are the visits I make, my therapy, my appointment with my doctor around the corner. If I'm out on the street maybe catching a breeze and watching beautiful people, and shooting starts, and I get it. Just being there innocently. So then what I tell Rico, Rico especially [youngest son], stay at my side. At my side nothing will happen to you.

Adolescents have perceptions similar to those of their parents. There is certainly adolescent violence in the Dominican Republic and many of the recent arrivals refer to fights they have had there. They even agree that there are many more physical fights in the schools of the Dominican Republic (despite an unrestrained use of physical punishment by many teachers that is often encouraged by parents). Adolescent violence in the Dominican Republic, however, is not organized around block gangs or "gangas" (there is no word for gangs in Spanish). The increased sense of danger and overall perception of less safety in the United States is due to the existence of gangs—nonexistent until recently in the Dominican Republic—and the use of weapons (knives and guns). It is the organization of violence in the United States that leads to a progressive escalation of conflict, increasing the likelihood of adolescent involvement in violent groups and their use of weapons.

In the following excerpt Bienvenido, recently arrived from the Dominican Republic, describes how New York is different:

BIENVENIDO: Here [in New York] it's better because there they [in the Dominican Republic] don't provide lunches. They don't give you lunch and one has to buy it and bring your own lunch to school.
INTERVIEWER: And when it comes to fights, do they fight more there than they do here?
BIENVENIDO: There they fight a lot but not like here with knives and all that.
INTERVIEWER: They use knives here?
BIENVENIDO: As far as I've heard. And they form bands.
INTERVIEWER: Bands?
BIENVENIDO: Gangs.

Adaptation of Immigrant Youth

In the previous two sections we established the vulnerability of immigrant adolescents because of their greater need to rely on peers as their primary role models, under whose guidance and example they adapt to their host country. This situation is especially difficult when the neighborhood they settle in is violent. In this section, I present how the process of immigration has affected the twelve sample members interviewed in the last year of the study and how they have adapted. Five of the adolescents (Hector, Isis, Martin, Antonio and David) are new immigrants and seven (Raul, Evelyn, Francine, Hanna, Wendy, Ali and Elsa) are second-generation, born in the U.S.

Some of the adolescents opted for access to material goods through the means immediately available to them in the neighborhood—drug dealing; others became part of the neighborhood gangs. All of the adolescents had to deal with violence and threats to their physical safety. Most opted for a pragmatic use of the neighborhood peer groups: being part of them when needed and progressively disengaging themselves when the groups did not provide safety or when the teens no longer perceived threats to their safety.

New Immigrants

All five students have in their family histories clear examples of the separation brought on by immigration. They all spent much of their childhood in the Dominican Republic under the supervision of their grandmothers, except Hector, who grew up with his father but also in the Dominican Republic. All of the parents had decided to immigrate to the United States in search of a better life and were forced to leave their children behind. Their luck varied. David's father went from being one of the neighbors in a very impoverished rural area of the Dominican Republic to becoming a businessman admired in his hometown. Antonio's father became a gypsy cab driver who was increasingly frustrated because of his limited income and the fact that he could not use his professional skills as an accountant. Isis' mother became ill and now receives SSI (Social Security Income), living with her son in one bedroom in a shared apartment. Martin's mother worked in a factory, lost her job and started working at a dry cleaner for $5 an hour. Hector's mother works as a home care attendant.

Of the five adolescents, Isis and Hector have experienced the most violent socialization process. They were often in trouble in school. Both were suspended for fighting and "jumping" others. While in high school, they robbed younger kids in the subway. Isis also had stolen from another student in his junior high school and then threatened him when the victim reported the incident to the principal. Both Hector and Isis' mothers were increasingly frustrated with their inability to control their sons' behavior. In school they were constantly misbehaving and missing classes. In eighth grade, both were diagnosed as in need of Special Education. Both dropped out of high school during their first year. Hector's mother sent him to the Dominican Republic for a

few months to be under his father's supervision. Hector and Isis attended the afterschool program in junior high sporadically and spent most of their time after school hanging out with friends. Hector and Isis became increasingly tighter with the gangs of their respective blocks. Now at age seventeen, both have been arrested and both sell drugs on their block. The block's drug dealer recruited Hector. Hector combines seasonal construction work with drug selling when construction work is not available. Hector prefers construction (it offers better hours, similar pay, and fewer risks). His desire to buy brand name clothes, smoke marijuana, buy sneakers for his girlfriend, and have money in his pocket requires a steady source of income: legal when possible, illegal when not. This is income that his mother could not provide him with since, in addition to her expenses in the U.S. as head of the family (she also has a five-year-old daughter), she is sending very needed money to help her family in the Dominican Republic. As she put it, "my family is poor. And even if it's only monthly one has to send a grain of sand."

Martin, Antonio and David had a more positive socialization. All three learned soon after their arrival about gangs and how to avoid them. David was robbed in seventh grade. Antonio was threatened at gunpoint. They both witnessed numerous assaults. Antonio lives in a building that throughout the duration of the study was used for drug dealing. He learned to be friendly with the "tigres" while keeping a safe distance. Martin, Antonio, and David all attended the afterschool program in junior high school. While they were in middle school, located within walking distance of their homes, their parents made sure that they were playing at home or with neighbors who could be trusted. None of them became involved with the neighborhood gangs.

Once in high school, Antonio and David, despite their initial very limited English ability, excelled academically. Martin has struggled more academically in high school. He has now registered in an academy that will prepare him to join the armed forces. Antonio and David are both working after school. David works in his father's store and Antonio works for a fast-food chain. After two years there, Antonio is now a very proud manager. These examples show that the parents' ability to effectively supervise their children, and the children's ability to quickly adapt to host institutions, especially school, lead to a positive socialization.

Despite an initial positive socialization, once in high school, Martin and David did become close friends with gang members soon after other students had threatened them. Gang members protected them from the threat of physical violence by other students. In both cases this protection by gang members was especially meaningful because it was at the beginning of their high school years, in a different school, in a neighborhood away from home. This initial friendship led both David and Martin to spend time with the gang after school. This contact with the gang indicates that despite the adolescents' initial conviction that "gangs are a bad thing," their perception changed when those gangs became the first and most effective line of defense against threats of violence in their high school.

American-Born

All American-born adolescents (Raul, Evelyn, Francine, Hanna, Wendy, Ali, and Elsa) grew up

in El Dorado. Their parents had different occupations, all with low income. Raul lives with his mother who works as a receptionist. His father lives in the Dominican Republic. Evelyn's mother also works as receptionist and her father works as a clerk in a pharmacy. Francine and Elsa live with their mothers, both receiving welfare. Hanna's mother works as a teacher's assistant and her stepfather worked in a factory until he incurred a job related injury. Wendy's mother is a social worker; Ali's mother is self-employed, cleaning offices.

All of these adolescents know members of their block's gang and have friends or relatives who have joined a gang. In their early adolescence, all except Evelyn strongly identified with peer groups connected with block gangs. Four of them, Hanna, Wendy, Ali and Elsa, engaged in violent behavior such as fighting, jumping, and threatening others with those peer groups and, at times, carried box cutters for protection. Later in their adolescence, once attending high school outside the neighborhood, the picture changed. Only Elsa, who dropped out of high school and spends most of her time in El Dorado, still remains strongly identified with a gang. The others have outright rejected their identities as gang members. Elsa is on probation for a fight in which she bit off part of her opponent's ear.

Raul, in early adolescence, was more concerned about a good break-dance move than about gangs. He spent most of his time in the afterschool program or with a close friend dancing. He rejected gangs as a form of cowardice for people unable "to take care of their own business." Later on, however, during his second year of high school, he started associating with peers who belong to a gang, the Latin Kings. He now identifies himself as a Latin King. His mother, in an effort to break that association, sent Raul to the Dominican Republic. As previously discussed, the strategy backfired: He was expelled from three different schools, kept getting in trouble, and eventually had to come back. Raul, just back from the Dominican Republic, is looking for a job and remains a member of the Latin Kings.

Evelyn and her sister Anne define their adolescence during their junior high school years as growing up "between four walls." Their parents were so concerned about their safety and the possible bad influences of their neighborhood that throughout their adolescence both daughters were closely monitored. They were only allowed to attend school; otherwise they were required to be at home or allowed to go places only under adult supervision. Even though Evelyn and Anne know all of the adolescents who belong to their block's gang, they were never allowed to be on the street unsupervised. Evelyn and Anne are now attending an alternative high school and they are fully engaged in their academic work and other school activities. They are critical of the gang on their block, especially since the time the members inquired why Evelyn's boyfriend was on "their street" and punched him. "They think they own the block," Evelyn explained critically.

Hanna and Francine are adolescent mothers. Their early identification with neighborhood peer groups created a great deal of tension between them and their parents. The tension became extreme when their mothers found out they had boyfriends. Both were threatened with being sent back to the Dominican Republic if they did not discontinue their relationships. Francine was sent to the Dominican Republic for a few months without the desired results. Soon after her return to the United States she became pregnant. "Now I can do whatever I want in my house," she says.

With motherhood came a more critical view of the gangs. She now rejects street behavior as childish and is especially critical of those girls who keep hanging out with the boys "because they fuck with everybody."

Wendy and Ali both work while continuing in school. Ali started working for a cleaning company, and Wendy works in a clothing store while attending a small alternative high school. Today, they characterize their old beefs and early phase of violence as childish behavior, something they have since outgrown.

Summary and Conclusions

I have presented the risk migration poses for adolescents, focusing especially on the cultural discontinuity that occurs within immigrant families. Parents socialized in their home country try to educate and discipline their children in ways that their adolescent children perceive to be outmoded and unaccepted in their new country. At the same time, adolescents have to socialize, or learn how to behave, in spheres—in school and on the street—in which their parents have not had previous experiences on which to rely to guide their children. This creates a condition in which adolescents think they must look to their peers for advice and as models for how to adapt to their new reality. The process of adaptation and socialization in the new country is also influenced by the neighborhood characteristics and the social organization of the violence that permeates the area. The immigrant youths must learn to navigate the violent terrain and learn from those in their neighborhood how to be accepted and safe.

Neighborhood characteristics are of primary importance in understanding the immigration process and how it relates to violence. Adolescents who have just recently arrived must quickly adapt in order to avoid victimization, and often embrace violent behavior as a way of fitting in their new environment. Second-generation adolescents grow up in this environment, in which violence is used as a means of getting and maintaining the respect of the block. Representing one's block is part of the adolescents' identity formation. The block provides safety, defines appropriate social networks, and identifies who enemies are.

For the majority of the adolescents in the sample engagement with adolescent peer groups was the result of learned behavior in the neighborhood. One of the most compelling reasons given for becoming part of the gangs is that they are a source of safety. For many adolescents, this affiliation is clearly contextual—as they grow older and attend high school outside their neighborhood's violent environment, their engagement with the violent peer groups diminishes. Many even change their perception, regarding this type of block-defined violence as childish. There is further evidence of the thesis that identification with violent adolescent peer groups is the result of a contextual need. Consider the experiences of those new immigrants who, while in junior high school, did not engage in gangs, but did so once in high school. After a threat of violence, they became friends with and affiliated with a gang, as a source of protection.

In order to prevent immigrant adolescents from joining violent peer groups we need to provide them with safe environments in which they can adapt to the new ways of the United States without having to resort to these groups for safety. In school, classrooms, hallways, and cafeterias should be safe. After school, settings that provide engaging supervised activities are needed to provide kids with an alternative to the streets.

Both new immigrant adolescents and second-generation adolescents talk about the need to have their own source of income, due to their families' limited resources and the strong pressure to dress in a certain more expensive style and have certain material goods. In addition, some

immigrant adolescents become parents at an early age. Most of the sample members provide for themselves and help to support their families. Some work legally (Antonio is a manager in a fast-food store; David works at his father's shoe store; Wendy works in a clothing store), some illegally (Isis sells marijuana), and others combine both (Hector works in construction and sells drugs). Providing job opportunities, and especially summer employment for these young people, would help respond to this need for income, allow adolescents to help their economically stressed families, and reduce their need to risk searching for illegal sources of income. When he had a choice, Hector opted for legal work.

As we have seen, the immigration process creates a wider generation gap. It is important that host institutions, such as schools, child protection agencies, and juvenile justice agencies, take an active role in informing immigrant parents about the safety risks that their children face in their neighborhoods. In addition, there is a need to dissipate immigrant parents' misunderstandings of what does and does not constitute physical abuse. Institutions that serve immigrant families need to reach out to parents and attempt to change the perception that they constitute a threat to immigrant families.

The plight of the second-generation immigrant adolescent is a difficult one. Because they are born in the U.S., they do not identify with the recent arrivals from the Dominican Republic, who are perceived as less culturally savvy and not well adapted. This situation is particularly poignant when second-generation children are sent back to the Dominican Republic and feel like strangers in what their parents still think of as their country. For first-generation adolescent immigrants the difficulty lies in having to quickly adapt to a new environment in which violence and group loyalty are important lessons. Being defined as a hick poses a threat to one's safety and one's sense of status among peers. There is strong pressure to socialize quickly into the new ways of the U.S. Ironically, there is a parallel between being a hick in the U.S. and a yo in the Dominican Republic. This is a reminder of the difficult process of adaptation that immigrant adolescents go through, often caught between two worlds and not quite belonging to either one.

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